

# Promoting Independence Through Vision Rehabilitation

With the aging of the population, vision loss is becoming a major public health concern in the United States. More than 2 million Americans have low vision, a visual impairment that cannot be corrected with standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery. People experiencing vision loss may have difficulty recognizing the faces of friends and relatives; performing everyday tasks such as reading, cooking, or sewing; picking out matching clothes; and reading street signs, even with regular glasses or contact lenses.

Eye diseases such as age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, and cataract are the leading causes of visual impairment in people over the age of 65. These conditions are on the rise and the number of people who are blind or have low vision is projected to increase substantially by the year 2020.



Adaptive devices such as video magnifiers can help people with low vision enhance their remaining vision.

Most people are not aware that numerous vision rehabilitation services are available to help them cope with their vision loss. While vision rehabilitation cannot restore lost sight, it can help people maximize the use of remaining vision, travel safely, take care of their home, meet career objectives, and enjoy leisure activities.

Patients with low vision should be encouraged to talk to their eye care professionals to learn about how they can make the most of their remaining vision. People at risk for low vision should have regular dilated eye exams, as early detection may prevent further vision loss.

For more information on vision rehabilitation, visit the Website of the National Eye Institute (NEI) at [www.nei.nih.gov/lowvision/](http://www.nei.nih.gov/lowvision/). The NEI is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.